

VZCZCXRO1915  
RR RUEHMA RUEHPA  
DE RUEHBP #0070 0341530  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 031530Z FEB 09  
FM AMEMBASSY BAMAKO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9978  
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS BAMAKO 000070

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [ML](#)

SUBJECT: DISORGANIZATION AND LACK OF FUNDS MAY DELAY LOCAL  
ELECTIONS

REF: A. BAMAKO 00027

[1](#)B. BAMAKO 00053

1.(SBU) Summary: One month after Mali's Ministry of Territorial Administration named April 26 as the date for local elections, it is not clear that the approximately USD 16 million required for the elections are available. Certainly, they have yet to be disbursed to the institutions responsible for organizing and overseeing the elections. In addition, reports in recent days point to a general disorganization, prompting at least one opposition leader to advocate postponement and an investigation into problems with voter registration lists. Since local officials' five year terms expire on May 31, a delay could cause some constitutional confusion and Malian officials may be forced to scramble to find a way to extend these expired mandates. End Summary.

2.(SBU) In late December 2008 Mali's Minister of Territorial Administration, General Kafougouna Kone, set April 26 as the date for local elections throughout Mali (Ref. A). The General Election Delegation (DGE), which falls within the Ministry of Territorial Administration, and the Independent National Election Committee (CENI) share responsibility for organizing and overseeing elections in Mali. To date, neither the DGE nor the CENI has received its share of the \$16 million reputedly budgeted for the administration of the 2009 local elections. Lack of funding, coupled with confusion over the status of Mali's nation-wide campaign to update voter rolls, have already led some in Mali to wonder if the April 26 date is truly feasible (Ref. B).

3.(U) On January 28, Tiebile Drame, the president of the opposition Party for National Renaissance (PARENA), added his voice to this skepticism and called for a six-month delay. Drame cited problems with the electoral list as his primary concern, calling for an investigation into purported irregularities. Drame pointed out that many local voter lists were in the process of being revised prior to the naming of local electoral commissions, the bodies supposedly in charge revising the lists. In supporting a election postponement and an investigation, he also cited the use of obsolete lists and general doubt about their reliability.

4.(SBU) Malian law allows elections to be postponed for up to six months. The April 26 date, however, is largely a function of the end date of current local officials' term in office. Elected in May 2004, these officials five-year terms will officially end on May 31. If local elections are not held by the end of April or early May at the earliest, Mali may find itself in the unusual position of having to extend these term limits to cover the gap. To complicate matters further, these same local officials are responsible for electing local mayors, whose five-year terms are also set to expire. As a result, postponing the local elections will raise legal questions not only for the local councils, but also local mayors.

5.(U) Meanwhile, Mountaga Tall, the president of the

National Congress for Democratic Initiatives Party (CNID), which is generally supportive of President Amadou Toumani Toure, lashed out at Mali's state-owned television station (ORTM) on January 27 for what Tall described as lopsided coverage of political parties. Citing biased media coverage, Tall gave several examples of how the ORTM has ignored or marginalized the CNID. Tall nevertheless vowed that the CNID was ready for the local elections and would enter the campaign season "with complete confidence."

6.(SBU) Comment: Mali was clearly hoping that international donors would provide financial support for the local elections. To our knowledge, only Germany - which provided financial and logistical support for Mali's presidential and legislative elections in 2007 - has responded to this request. The voter registration problems will likely not be fixed until Mali's voter registration program, known as RAVEC, is complete and the time line for completion of this project is rapidly heading toward late 2009 or beyond. Wobbly electoral lists, together with a financial deficit and the expiration of Mali's local government officials' terms in office, present election officials in Bamako with a rather unappealing electoral dilemma.  
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